

EXHIBIT 4

Ndebele Funeral

A full-length play

By Zoey Martinson

© 2010 Zoey Martinson
339 Lincoln Place, #3i
Brooklyn, NY 11238
917-903-4809
smokemirrors.co@gmail.com

NDEBELE FUNERAL

Written by Zoey Martinson

Music by Tuelo Minah

Choreography by Sduduzo Ka-Mbili and Cuereston Burge

Edited by Ndumiso Khovana

All Characters are South African

Jan, White (male early 30's) sarcastic, socially awkward and enduring. After walking around all day in the hot sun he brings a familiar threat into Thandi's home.

Mandisi, Black (male early 30's) married, optimistic, very religious, brings light and positive energy into Thandi's home while struggling with a devastating secret.

Thandi, Mixed (female early 30's), political, depressed, university educated with a dark sense of humor. Has embraced her death. She has a short temper, is physically weak and obviously struggling with tuberculosis.

Note: The play has moments where it breaks into another world that has movement, music and poetry at the same time. These moments are not Choreo-Poetry but are based in rhythm or Gumboot dance and reflect a specific type of oral storytelling in South Africa called township theatre. The *(BAM)* is a rhythmic punctuation is achieved with the gumboot dance steps that go with the text.

SONGS

THULA TU - LULLABY

Thula tu
thula baba
thula sana
thl'ubaba 'uzobuya ekuseni
(repeat)
Kukhw' inkanyez
eholel 'ubaba
emhole la laph'a
thandukuya a khona
(repeat)
Tha'a thula thula sana
Tha'a thula thula sana
Translation:
hush now

hush now baby(boy)
 hush now baby(girl)
 your dad is going to come in the morning
 there is a star that leads your dad to where we are
 hush hush hush baby

NJALO

uhlal'ukhala Njalo
 Njalo
 wena Njalo
 wena Njalo, uhlal'ukhala (men: uhlal'ukhala)
 Njalo
 ukhangelo uthando
 awuthanzi bantu
 (repeat twice)
 Men: bangakhi wena?
 Woman: Ngithi utuanze bangakhi wena?
 (repeat four times)
 Tandla diyagezana
 (repeat four times)
 Jeyi, Jeyi, Jeyi, Jeyi
 Awuthanzi mnalo
 Awuthanzi mvelo
 Awuthanzi muntu
 Awuthanzi mdali wakho
 (repeat twice)
 Men: ngubani wena?
 Woman: Ndi utawuthanza ngubani wena?
 (repeat twice)
Translation:
 Always, you always
 Always, you always
 you cry always
 you look for love
 you say no one loves you
 if so, how many have loved you?
 one hand washes the other
 one hand washes the other
 you don't love me
 you don't love nature
 you don't love anyone
 you don't love your creator
 so who can (will) love you?

NDEBELE FUNERAL

A shack in the Informal Settlement Kliptown near Johannesburg, South Africa. THANDI (clinical stage IV AIDS, she has extrapulmonary tuberculosis, and visible sores on her body. She is physically weak, but there is a deep strength inside her bones. Every movement costs her something.) She is resting inside a wooden coffin. The coffin is a work of art. She has used a door as the side panel for the coffin and painted Ndebele design on the outside. Thandi is lying inside the coffin. The room is run down, but there is still a sense that it is someone's home. There is a mattress on the ground, a table, some crates, a plastic bucket, boxes and used candles everywhere you look. There is a large amount of beer bottles under the table covered by a cloth. Trash is littered all over the room, the floorboards are exposed and there is dirt poking through. The walls are insulated with newspaper and cereal boxes, like a piece of art. There is color and beauty.

Jan knocks on the door of the shack.

JAN

109 N.D. Kliptown? *(He knocks again)* Sawubona?... Hello... *(He knocks harder and the door shakes the whole shack)* Oh shit! Ooops. Ummm, hello... Sawubona? Oh come on really! *(He leans on the door and starts mumbling to himself, he finally turns on his walkie talkie. There is loud static.)*

THANDI

Come on!!! *(She moves in the coffin and the side piece facing the door falls off the coffin and her head pops out)* Shit!! *(She crawls out of the coffin, and goes to the door, peering through the cracks)* What do you want?

JAN

Ahhhh, yes, Hello! My name is Jan De Klerk. I'm with the Johannesburg Department of Human/ Settlements...

THANDI

Not interested. *(Jan peeks through a crack in the side of the door. Thandi catches him and hits the crack.)* My business.

JAN

Sorry. Ja, I'm looking for 109 N.D.? Name... ummm Thandi ummm, no that's it just Thandi.

THANDI

Wrong stop.

JAN

Really? Fuck! Sorry. I mean could you possible direct me where I need to go.

(Pause)

THANDI

Ja, sure.

THANDI opens the door. JAN sees her and takes a step back. THANDI tries to hide in her skin.

THANDI

You go up that hill towards Bara Hospital, take a left. Then ask some else. It is very far. Enjoy.

(She closes the door quickly and locks it. Jan leaves. As he walks away his footsteps become a rhythm from the outside world. The rhythm combines walking and Gumboot dance.)

Thandi picks up a nail to pound her plank back onto her coffin, the pounding sync's up with Jan's rhythm from the outside world. During the pounding Mandisi comes enters the space disheveled. He is scattered, rushed and trying to shake something off. When Mandisi gets to the door of the shack he joins Jan's rhythm and Gumboot. Jan, Thandi and Mandisi are in their own worlds and should not interact with each other. When the rhythm comes to a climax Thandi begins to sing (*NJALO*). Jan and Mandisi join her.

THANDI, MANDISI, JAN

(Sung)
 uhlal'ukhala Njalo
 Njalo
 wena Njalo
 wena Njalo, uhlal'ukhala (men: uhlal'ukhala)
 Njalo
 ukhangelo uthando
 awuthanzi bantu
 (repeat twice)
 Men: bangakhi wena?
 Woman: Ngithi utuanze bangakhi wena?
 (repeat four times)
 Tandla diyagezana
 (repeat four times)
 Jeyi, Jeyi, Jeyi, Jeyi
 Awuthanzi mnalo
 Awuthanzi mvelo
 Awuthanzi muntu
 Awuthanzi mdali wakho
 (repeat twice)
 Men: ngubani wena?
 Woman: Ndi utawuthanza ngubani wena?
 (repeat twice)

During the song. The lights shift, the world moves, and Mandisi starts to tell the beginning of the story that has been stuck in his head.

MANDISI

Out of the brown dust and hopes a child was created.
 A sigh
 A song
 A burp
 A fart
 (BAM)
 Her eyes reflected the night sky, her hair was the color of moist earth, and unlike most babies she asked for nothing.
 (BAM)
 So people loved her.
 She was the answer to an unheard question.
 (BAM)
 A gift to an unknown future.
 And deep in her possession was a rare golden light.
 (BAM)
 He finds her, a vast stream of golden answers.
 He takes a piece of her away.

He comes back for more.
(BAM) Taking pieces of her away
(BAM) The golden light dims,
(BAM) She lies down outside of Jo'bug and becomes the dust.
Quiet
Stillness
Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

As Mandisi finishes his story the song ends.
Jan leaves the space and Thandi has gone back
inside her coffin.

Mandisi comes to the door of the shack. He
peeks into a crack in the door and doesn't see
Thandi. He tries to calm his nerves, takes a deep
breath and wipes his brow. He leaves the shack.

I'm here!

MANDISI

(To herself) Shit!

THANDI

Thandi opens the door of the coffin and gets out.

Thandi! I'm heeere!

MANDISI

What! Why! You are just showing up to people's homes uninvited, now!

THANDI

Ja, That's how I roll!
(Mandisi enters the room.)

MANDISI

Eh, what the fuck Mandisi?

THANDI

Dont't what the fuck me Thandi. You haven't been returning my calls!

MANDISI

Check your voicemail man. I sold my phone last month.

THANDI

MANDISI

What voicemail? Nobody calls any more, everything's on Whatsapp or Facebook.

THANDI

Ahh Fakebook!

MANDISI

Facebook! (*Thandi doesn't respond*) You're joking right! Everybody is on Facebook, everybody's mother is on Facebook. It's a social networking site. I have like 380 friends and/

THANDI

Ja, it sounds complicated.

MANDISI

What! No it's easy. Well... you can have conflicts and stuff if you don't friend someone, but they send you a request. Like my co worker friended me but she is Coo coo bananas and I don't want her all up in my life, but then she got really mad cause I ignored her request and now I have to avoid her at /work...

THANDI

Ja, well that's informative Mandisi, but I'm not really concerned about that right now. I just going to lie down.

Mandisi stops and looks at Thandi. He notices that she has gotten a lot worse since his last visit.

MANDISI

Thandi you look awful!

THANDI

Don't be rude!

MANDISI

Yoh... I left you money to buy medication last time I was here.

THANDI

Did you?

MANDISI

What did you do with the money?

THANDI

I had to eat. Fucking medication is expensive. You have to be big time to afford/

MANDISI

They are free woman! Free retrovirals/

THANDI

Afford the TB treatment and besides we both know it's pointless at this/

MANDISI

It's not pointless, they come out with new medication everyday. Before it was multiple pills now it's just one pill. It's not a death sentence...

THANDI

Mandisi, look at me.

MANDISI

I am, and you look awful/

THANDI

You can go now!

MANDISI

Yoh, come now, I didn't mean it like/

THANDI

Come into my home, tell me I look awful? Get out!

MANDISI

Eh Eh, you are soooo beautiful.

THANDI

You lie like a rug!

MANDISI

Why are you sweating.

THANDI

Yoga.

MANDISI

And what is that smell/

THANDI

(Smelling herself) Well it hasn't been that long but/

MANDISI

(He finds umqombothi)

So umqombothi part of your morning meditation?

MANDISI starts to pick through her things.

THANDI

(Grabs umqombothi) Yes actually it's my liquid meditation.... Now stop it...my stuff, Mandisi don't touch everything/

MANDISI

Thandi... Thandi!

THANDI

Get out!

MANDISI

Why would/ you...

THANDI

You shouldn't be meddling with other people's things!

MANDISI

Oh my God, Thandi/

THANDI

I said get out Mandisi!

MANDISI

I'm not going/

THANDI

Please!

MANDISI

This wasn't here the last time I came.

THANDI

And when was the last time you came/

MANDISI

Come on!/...

THANDI

Exactly!

MANDISI

It's just/ that...

THANDI

Forget it, it doesn't matter.

MANDISI

It does. I left that money to buy medication not to build a/...

THANDI

I'm not taking that medication!

MANDISI

What! Why?!

THANDI

Because what is the fucking point of prolonging a hopeless dream. I'm a living reality man, I'm a living wake up call/ Mandisi

MANDISI

It's not hopeless, maybe/ if

THANDI

Maybe what? Someone will hire me looking like this,/ Nah!

MANDISI

I was joking before/

THANDI

Maybe I'll one day wake up and go for an invigorating jog up to the Soweto Hotel for tea?!

MANDISI

That's not what I/

THANDI

Maybe my mother would call me from Gugulethu!

MANDISI

Well if you didn't sell your phone!

THANDI

Doesn't matter, in ten years she never called.

MANDISI

That was a long time ago, people were scared.

THANDI

I was scared!

MANDISI

Oh, come on Thandi! Your alive right now/ so...

THANDI

Ja, but not for long. Just let me make my arrangements in peace.

MANDISI

What am I supposed to watch my friend, that I love, build a fucking/

THANDI

This is why I didn't want you to come. / Jy moenie my hou nie... (Don't love me now...)

MANDISI

I can't help it Thandi. We have been friends for years. It's not a tap, you can't turn it on and off. You are like caffeine, it might make you twitch a little bit but you can't live without it. *(Beat)* Besides you might not think about this but what about me? /I might not...

THANDI

Just give me this one thing, Mandisi.

MANDISI

I will make sure you have a real coffin.

THANDI

We both know you can't afford that.

MANDISI

So I will/

THANDI

Please let me have this Mandisi! *(Thandi coughs.)*

MANDISI

Hey, hey, hey, hey. I think it's beautiful.

(BEAT) Mandisi starts to clean. It is near impossible.

THANDI

What are you doing now? Stop! You're going to ruin the Feng shui of the room.

MANDISI

This is trash!

THANDI

So.

MANDISI

You are really trying to tell me/

THANDI

Ja. The harmony of the room relies on that one bag. Drop it.

MANDISI

You are cracking up. It is a good thing I come now- Look at this place. God! You forget how to keep house, have company? You should have offered me cool drink, come now Thandi!

Thandi goes and grabs a warm beer.

MANDISI

Beer is not what I had in mind.
Some water?

THANDI

It's too heavy for me to carry from the tap. Way up that hill then down here, so...

MANDISI

Then what do you drink around here?

Thandi slams down the beer in front of him

MANDISI

Oh, God, Thandi

THANDI

God has no business here.

MANDISI

Yoh! Apparently you chased him out.

Thandi starts to shuffle around, she sets up two small crates for them to sit on.

THANDI

Sit. What do you have to say now, Baas.

Pause. Mandisi tries to sit awkwardly on the small crate.

THANDI

You seem unsettled.

MANDISI

I'm fine.

Mandisi finally finds a way to make the small box work as a seat.

THANDI

So what's the news, eh?

MANDISI

Ummmm?

THANDI

(BEAT, Thandi watches Mandisi. He is a million miles away, but sitting right in front of her.) Eh, Mandisi... what's the news?

MANDISI

The what?

Mandisi is now sitting trying to organize the pleats on the bottom of his pants.

THANDI

You okay? Something wrong?

MANDISI

No, no, I'm fine, really.

THANDI

Really? It's just that you usually start to organize things when something is wrong with you?

MANDISI

Do I?

THANDI

Yea.

MANDISI

Oh. Yebo... So what were you asking me about?

THANDI

The news!

MANDISI

Oh right. So, let me see... Oh! Very big story... The ANC are trying to move people out of the shacks into those RDP houses they built for free. But they are encountering two problems; people are staying in the shacks and renting out their RDP's to make money off of it. And the people who are in charge of assigning the homes have started taking bribes from families who want to move in. So at the end of the day it isn't free anyway because you have to pay someone to get into them, but they are nice homes/

THANDI

I don't want to hear about this. It doesn't concern me.

MANDISI

Yes it does. You will qualify for one of those new homes.

THANDI

I will be dead by the time I ever see one of those new homes, Mandisi. I don't want to hear about the government or ANC or the president.

MANDISI

Fine. Well Obama/

THANDI

From any country! Worthless all of it!

MANDISI

Then I don't know what news to tell you Thandi.

THANDI

Well you could tell me what's happening on the soapie 7de Laan?

MANDISI

Why do you love that show?! You know I don't watch that crap.

THANDI

Well then fun stuff! Like last time you told me about the coffee beans the animals eat, and then shit out.

MANDISI

What bean?

THANDI

The coffee beans! What's wrong with you? You are getting old. Your brain is starting to freeze up? You told me about the beans they feed to a strange little animal then sell to the British at 400 pounds per kilo. And they actually buy it; they pay 50 pounds per cup, that's like R900 per cup, to drink animal shit... Ja, I love it! I didn't even believe you, so I asked Zenele to look it up and it's true...

MANDISI

That's not even news, I mean it was in the paper but!

THANDI

Never mind the rest... You remember?

MANDISI

I remember that story Thandi. But there were/

THANDI

You used to tell so many stories like that. Good funny stories, ja! I thought you would write a book. Wait, what happened to your book of poems?

MANDISI

You remember that?

THANDI

Ja, wait... it was The Poetical Life of the Nebulous Sun?

Mandisi and Thandi share a laugh.

THANDI

What does that even mean? Like sun as in sun or son as in son.

MANDISI

No clue. Like Nebulous clouds or something. I thought I was deep, man, ja.

THANDI

Very deep man ja. Oh oh remember we used to do those little poems like... I

MANDISI

Went

THANDI

To

MANDISI

The

THANDI

Store

MANDISI

To

THANDI

Get

MANDISI

A

THANDI

Penis!!

MANDISI

What! No, you always ruin it by adding/ that word!

THANDI

Penis!

MANDISI

Ugh! No time for that fun stuff now, got to make Rand, work, make money. Mmmm Ja, if I had been a big rich man, I could have done many things.

THANDI

We all could do many things if we weren't too concerned with eating or dying, brother. But some people still do them.

MANDISI

I don't know those people Thandi.

THANDI

Neither do I... Okay, now. Let's hear what you have for me today?

MANDISI

Well now. Let me see hear. Oh oh did you here about the black squirrels in Russia (pronounced Rush-sheyah)?

THANDI

What do you think?

MANDISI

They say on CNN.com. In a village in Russia/

THANDI

Where?

MANDISI

Russia!

THANDI

Ja, where in Russia (pronounced Rush-sheyah)?

MANDISI

Who cares it's in Russia? You been to Russia?

THANDI

How do I know the credibility of the story if you don't know where? It is a big country-

MANDISI

Ahhhhh, Woman! Would you let me get the story out, you don't need to know where in Russia!(pause) By the Sea!!! A town by the sea.

THANDI

I like the sea.

MANDISI

Great! So in Russia the black squirrels killed a big black dog. They think a pinecone shortage led to the attack. That is their food, pinecone.

The big stray dog was poking around the trees and started barking at the Squirrels hiding in the branches. Then one day, Bam! They had enough, the squirrels, and they descended and attacked the dog. Millions, thousands, okay, like ten squirrels, ate him. They ran when the villagers came. The people said, the squirrels ran away carrying pieces of the Dog's flesh/

THANDI

Is that true, Mandisi?

MANDISI

On my life! People are scared because they think the squirrels will come for them next.

THANDI

Flesh eating squirrels? You can't believe everything you read online.

MANDISI

It's true woman it was on CNN.com that goes to the U.S.

THANDI

That means nothing; they lie to the people there too.

MANDISI

The British believe CNN.com; it is very reliable.

THANDI

OH yes they are the score of truth.

MANDISI

Aye, you are too much! You have to believe in something Thandi or... you have nothing.

THANDI

That must be the reason I have nothing. I don't believe the U.S., the British, or South Africa.

MANDISI

Exactly.

THANDI

But you blindly believe, and what do you have?

MANDISI

I have/

THANDI

Just a bunch of expensive shit. Congratulations!

MANDISI

That's not fair!

THANDI

It's True.

MANDISI

(Gets up angry) I like my life.

THANDI

Fucking good for you! You are like the flesh eating squirrels and everyone else... just feeding the problem.

MANDISI

Eh Angry woman! Don't' blame me, squirrel! Do you want to know what is going on in the world or do you just want someone to attack? Ummm? Last time I came here you say "Ohh Mandisi, why do you always bring sad news. Wa wa wa, what about the world, Mandisi? You've got to look for the good, blah, blah " The good?! Jah, like some happy greeting card! The news is not good. That is reality of these times, or all times if you look at history. It's not me, you can blame me and be angry, but it's not my fault. I didn't put you in a shack!

THANDI

Eh eh, now that's not fair/

MANDISI

And to be honest I don't even think people know who to blame anymore that's the problem. These people marching in the street destroying stuff, causing more damage than good, blaming everybody but themselves and just taking. I don't know, I guess people just want to blame the president and ANC, as if they could run things better/

THANDI

Oh, God! I'm tired of hearing this Mandisi! People walking around complaining, blah, blah government. But people keep voting for the ANC! It's a shame because if anyone from our government looked at African history, they would see that most parties that gains power after colonization stay in power until there is a civil war or something. African democracy! So they feed us crappy American TV Fakebok/

MANDISI

Face, facebook/ like a face! *(He gestures to his face.)*

THANDI

Shit, all of it! And we think we're moving forward. They piss on our face and convince us its rain, the united states of Africa/ and people buy it up...

MANDISI

Piss? Rain?

This is the thing about Apartheid. It used to be so easy... or focused you know. You knew who your enemy was. My dad used to blame the white baas man, right that was tangible and specific.

He smiled and said, “Yes Baas” now it’s a black baas, now I smile with the whites and say “Yes Baas”. We all smile so that our families can have a good house, good education, nice things, but my life isn’t piss and rain/, Thandi

THANDI

Everyone’s life is, everyone’s life is- I don’t want to talk about this! I don’t even care that much. It depresses/ me.

MANDISI

Well you should, everybody should! You used to care so much.

THANDI

I don’t want to talk about this government bullshit, because that is all it is. Bullshit. Bunch of men and women in suits talking a bunch of shit they know nothing about. Trying to fix problems they have never had in their wealthy lives. Cause in the end of the day they go home to their mansions, with their kids in private schools, with their medical aid and they are a million miles away from this place. A shack they pretend to know nothing about and poverty they might have never felt. And we are the ones working their nothing wage jobs, and we are the ones who can’t even afford to buy their shit, while they make billions. With their back door deals keeping their pockets fed. Money coming from business that profit from keeping us here. It’s called capitalism, Mandisi, and it makes me sick. So no, I don’t care anymore, because I don’t want to.

MANDISI

That’s a shame because people like you could have changed it.

THANDI

Well are we? Do people really want to change it? As long as they can dream of getting their nice car and shiny new smarty phone, as long as we can be placated with shit we agree to do nothing. And you get angry at the people who take to the streets because they’ve got nothing to loose, that need to grab on to something and shake it so people notice they are still here and starving. We get mad at the people but ignore the policy that has forgotten them.

MANDISI

There are many people that have been forgotten and they don’t take to the streets or become criminals, or xenophobic or *decide* to come *here* and hide from life, Thandi!

THANDI

Ja, and when did I get to make that decision Mandisi! I can see where life made that decision for me. Like a stupid map. From University to getting sick, can’t find a job, doing odds and ends, coming here, staying here...dying here. That was my life. Like a train on a track to no where...

MANDISI

And you are the conductor of that train/

THANDI

No, I was just a passenger that didn't know when to get off until there were no more stops.

MANDISI

There are always stops my friend, and I know you don't want to hear this, but if you decide to listen, God does have a plan for us all/

THANDI

Really! Is that supposed to be comforting? So God's divine plan for me was to get sick and die in a shack! Wow what a great guy, really want to meet him/

MANDISI

No, it's not like/

THANDI

Maybe we can get some lunch and I can tell him what a fuck shit mess he's made of my life/

MANDISI

No no no, that is not God! God is/

THANDI

A fragment of your imagination/

MANDISI

You know, you are becoming impossible. Living like this/ is no good.

THANDI

Mandisi?

MANDISI

Look at you? Living in Lord Voldemort's lair/

THANDI

What?

MANDISI

Harry Potter is a international franchise! And you're always angry grrr grrr grrr/

THANDI

(With a smile) Mandisi?

MANDISI

I was just trying to tell you about squirrels in Russia, and grr grr grr-!!

THANDI

What do I care for squirrels in Russia?

MANDISI

I don't know Thandi; I'm trying to let some life into this place.

THANDI

You keep the "life" I'm done with it.

MANDISI

OOOO sister, come come. That is enough of that talk.

They hear Jan in the distance knocking on doors
down the road. He calls out some house numbers
then some names.

JAN (*OFF STAGE*)

Excuse me, excuse me, I'm looking for 109 N.D...well, could you tell me where I am?
Wait, don't leave... (*Dog barking*) Shit.

Both Thandi and Mandisi look at the door and
wait to hear if he is done. Beat.

THANDI

Sooo... how is your family?

MANDISI

They are good. My wife got a promotion at the Bank.

THANDI

Oh that's good!

MANDISI

Yea, very good! We celebrated last night, a big braai; if you had a phone, then... But lots of
people came. Good Food/

THANDI

What food?

MANDISI

Boerewors, Dried Apricot and Lamb Sosaties, yellow rice with raisins, Spiced Sausage
patties, cheese pot bread. Vetkoek...

THANDI

Oh, bhuti!

MANDISI

Meat pies, sausage rolls, oooh yeah, I saved you a plate but... something happened. I dropped it sorry.

THANDI

Mandisi, don't/

MANDISI

Sorry.

THANDI

Don't tell me then, ahh I love your patties.

MANDISI

Yea well, I'll bring some next time.

THANDI

Yoh... How are the little ones?

MANDISI

They are good.

THANDI

Getting big, I bet.

MANDISI

Yes, oh, the small boy is starting school on Monday. I have pictures in my wallet, here. Oh never mind... I must have left it.

THANDI

Your wallet?

MANDISI

It's getting difficult to come here. This area is getting very dangerous.

THANDI

That's why you started carrying that gun? Ja, I saw it.

MANDISI

It's just- too much crime, it's, it's no good. People feel like they can just take what you worked hard for. Like last night I... I...

THANDI

What?

MANDISI

Why don't you come back with me to Kempton Park? You can stay with us somewhere, it will be good.

THANDI

Where? You have no room! Nah, I have no interest in Jo'burg. This suits me quite well.

MANDISI

This part of Soweto is getting so dangerous.

THANDI

Mandisi you have a wonderful family and they shouldn't have to see me like this. I am fine here. I belong here.

MANDISI

A shack! Nobody belongs in a shack! You were not born for this. Thandi/ you grew up in...

THANDI

Nobody is born for this Mandisi, but sometimes it is the best you can do. Look around; do you see anyone born for this?

MANDISI

Yes, I do, some people/ are

THANDI

Leave your judgments to your God! These are people not with the opportunities you had, good education, good University, good /Job

MANDISI

Ja! You studied medicine Thandi/

THANDI

I never got my license...

MANDISI

(cont.) At University of Cape Town (UCT) and now/

THANDI

...and now I'm just another Tracker in another fucking Shack.

MANDISI

You have limited access to water, and stolen electricity... pardon my "Judgment" but this is no life; not when you had opportunities and you did nothing with them. You waste them away. So many children here would die for what you had. It's unfair to them, you sitting here.

THANDI

Eh eh, life is unfair, Mandisi. Don't put that shit on me, brother. You do not know what will become of these children anyway. We hope they do better, but have we done better?

Ja I didn't... My mother thought the same of me I'm sure. Look at this. Big medical degree, dying in a shack.

MANDISI

But you don't have/

THANDI

Ja, I stay here. There are people around to talk to, I can hear life happening, there is a pulse. I am sick. I could make your family sick/

MANDISI

It's just...I can't keep coming here.

THANDI

It's fine.

MANDISI

It's not fine, Thandi. You are my best friend. I just don't... I just can't... What will you do for money?

THANDI

I have my ways. Maybe I sell some of this stuff, people want to build homes. Maybe I sell my big University brain, make some money off of it. Don't worry about me.

MANDISI

I do worry.

THANDI

Jah, but don't. It doesn't help. (Pause)

Thandi coughs and grabs her chest. She drinks some beer to silence the cough. Mandisi watched defeated, Thandi sees Mandisi.

Enough of this, good friend. Tell me what music you listen to at the Braai?

MANDISI

All types. Of course we played some Mafikizolo, Dj Oskido, and a party would not be a real party without Dr. Malinga!

THANDI

What about Mariam Makeba?

MANDISI

No, What? It's a Braai!

THANDI

Oh... Shame. I've got a song of hers making a nest in my brain.

Thandi begins to sing Mariam Makeba. Mandisi joins her. Mariam Makeba continues to play through the two monologues. The lights shift and Mandisi talks to the audience.

MANDISI

I was born in a Shack like this. I never told that to anyone. Once I left I told my mom, “That’s it, I’m never coming back. You either come with me, or we say our final goodbyes.” In the end she came, but it took some major convincing. She wanted to stay. I never understood that! Why would you want to live like this? Why would you choose to stay? Thandi will stay; she is too stubborn to leave. This is the last time I come here; I can’t come back, after... I met Thandi at University. I liked her hair it looked like a spring. When all the other women wore their hair straight, Thandi had the biggest curly hair you have ever seen. Like a lion head. I could not believe how forward she was, more like a man than a woman. She had a red car, and had been given an award for a paper she had written on something I can’t remember. She is the only person in the whole world that knows that dreamed of being a writer. She is my best friend. She is the person I turn to for everything. When my mother died she got me through. She introduced me to my favorite international dish, called pancakes. She knows my darkest secrets. When I didn’t have enough money for tuition one semester Thandi gave me the money and never asked for it back. She still won’t take it. I can’t picture the world without her in it. It would be like the night sky without the stars or moon. It would be weird, and lonely...

Mandisi goes back to singing with Thandi, she breaks away to speak the following to the audience.

THANDI

The Day I met Mandisi we were at a social dance. Everyone had paired up to dance really slow and close, but nobody would choose me. There had been these rumors, ubambe ilotto. And...

FLASHBACK, they jump back in time to when they first met. The Lights shift and the world changes. They are back at a school dance where they awkwardly dance away from each other.

MANDISI

This song is good-oh...

THANDI

(Ignores him)

MANDISI

Umm, she is such a fine singer... classic.
I really like your hair, it’s very... Fun! Like grape vine, or coil... it’s like a noodle/

THANDI

/My hair looks like food? Ja, alright, go on get out of here.

MANDISI

No no. It's a good thing, it's...I like noodles. You have a dimple it is very/

THANDI

If you are trying to pick me up, I'm not interested. I just want to dance... alone... with you somewhere over there behind all those people.

MANDISI

No no, It's not that. I just saw your debate on The Truth and Reconciliation Commission. You were really good.

THANDI

Sorry I don't remember you being in my class.

MANDISI

No, I was auditing it. You were very convincing and powerful, I couldn't take my eyes off of you.

THANDI

I'm not interested.

MANDISI

I mean, you speak with so much conviction.

THANDI

Alright, alright, then what did I say?

MANDISI

That you were not interested in/

THANDI

No, In the speech?

MANDISI

Oh! Something... Human beings are born inherently good, possessing so much light and... And something like we must find a way to forgive ourselves because everybody was part of Apartheid, even those who suffered from it, and that will help get rid of our personal hate or something... I guess I don't really remember the words too well, but I do remember that you were right!

THANDI

The judges didn't seem to think so... I lost...

MANDISI

Ja, but one day they will. When our generation are the judges, they will.

THANDI

Thandi.

MANDISI

Uh, what/

THANDI

Thandi, my name.

MANDISI

Yes I know.

THANDI

What is your name?

MANDISI

Mandisi!

THANDI

What do you study?

MANDISI

You know a little bit of this, little bit of that/

THANDI

Do you even study here?

MANDISI

Yes! Of course I do, I would never creep around/

THANDI

No, it was a joke

MANDISI

Oh yes I see.

THANDI

No you don't.

MANDISI

Not really, no. I haven't decided what I want to do with my life. But I do know that whatever it is I want to help people, in the name of Jesus/ and write

THANDI

In the name of Jesus? Why not in the name of Mandisi? Then everyone is included.

MANDISI

Ha, another joke.

THANDI

I'm serious.

MANDISI

Ooh well, I want to help people, period. In the name of Jesus is just something people say. Like, I dance in the name of Jesus, or I testify in the name of Jesus/

THANDI

I see. Like, I put on my shoe in the name of Jesus, and I drink this beer in the name of Jesus/

MANDISI

Well not so much the beer part.

THANDI

I'm sure Jesus drank beer? It's the poor mans wine and he was poor.

MANDISI

Ja, okay, let's not talk about Jesus.

THANDI

(laughing) Why not?

MANDISI

Because he means a great deal to people here and they don't want to think about their lord and savior sucking a dumpie.

THANDI

Nobody can even hear me.

MANDISI

It means a great deal to me.

THANDI

I see... What does it mean to you, Mandisi?

MANDISI

You know- I don't know.

THANDI

I would love to know.

MANDISI

Everything! You know everything that is good and beautiful and pure. (beat)
Like the flowers in the spring time around the garden route, Namaqualand. You know the kinds that make you just stop and catch your breath, those colors are why we live.

And the smell moist earth, and children when you make them laugh and peoples eyes if
you can catch them really open before they put up the security walls.
And love, tons of love, mountains of love.
And good tears, and good food, and good intensions, oh and dancing when your heart
becomes the rhythm, and singing loudly when nobody can hear, alone.
Sacrifice. You're mother's arms. The night sky when you can see all the stars.
Silence. Your heart beating. A sigh. A laugh. A cry. Mmmmmm

THANDI

You are a poet Mandisi.

MANDISI

That's what it is, to me.

THANDI

Just like that? I don't know what to say.

MANDISI

I've made you uncomfortable haven't I? I always do this. People have told me my whole
life that I am strange.

THANDI

Me too.

MANDISI

But in a good way.

THANDI

No, like in a strange way.

MANDISI

Would you like to dance?

THANDI

Hell yes I want to dance, brother lets go!!!

MANDISI

Well okay then!

Thandi talks to the audience, back to the present.

THANDI

We danced like two crazy people. I thought he was the kindest person I ever met. Mandisi
puts everybody else first, can't help it. He has the best heart, God gave him that. I don't
really believe in God, but he does, so I know it's true. Ja! I know.

They dance like at a party. Somehow it turns into a ritual dance, into something that is unrecognizable but requires two people. It ends with them across stage from each other breathing each other in. A sneeze brings them back to life in present time.

We hear Jan in the doorway

JAN

I'm looking for 109, you know 1. 0. 9. *(He pops his head in.)* 109? *(Thandi hides her face. Mandisi shakes this head no, Jan walks out of door.)* There are no numbers...*(He talks to his radio.)* Ja I am trying but there are no numbers here in Fucksburg!

Jan fades out as he walks away.

Beat. This time Mandisi goes to the door.

MANDISI

What is going on?

THANDI

No clue. It can't be good.

MANDISI

I feel kind of bad for him.

THANDI

Why?

MANDISI

He seems lost. Like a lamb in a pack of lions.

THANDI

Really, a lamb? Lions? Really? You take some major poetic license there. I would think a snake in... what is something that could eat a snake but doesn't like the way they taste?

MANDISI

A leopard or owl... or something, like the big five?

THANDI

Ja, that works.

Thandi goes to get another beer, she offers one to Mandisi, who shakes his head. Mandisi notices her massive beer collection.

MANDISI

Wow, okay! So I have to ask. Exactly how do you get the money to buy all this beer?

THANDI

It's not important.

MANDISI

Fine. But how? Sisi, I want to know... THANDI!

THANDI

The security guard at the Pick n Pick is 24 hours drunk.

MANDISI

You mean the Pick n Pay?

THANDI

Ja, but everyone calls it the Pick n Pick now because he is 24 hours drunk. All the time. So Zenele gets the beer from the Pick n Pick and brings it here.

MANDISI

So everyone is just stealing from the Pick n Pay?!

THANDI

No, contrary to what you think not everyone in Kliptown has decayed moral values, bhuti. Just us select few godless brutes.

MANDISI

It is wrong, Thandi.

THANDI

What do I care- right and wrong! You better not say anything. Catch a wave of Christian guilt and say anything Mandisi... Mandisi!

MANDISI

Fine. I won't say anything. *(Beat)* Fuck it, give me that beer.

THANDI

Eh eh now that's the spirit!

Thandi turns around to get Mandisi a beer. While her back is turned Mandisi grabs a bottle but it is opened and not a beer.

MANDISI

Thandi what is this? Sisi what is this?

THANDI

(Beat) Don't drink that Mandisi.

MANDISI

Why can't I drink this Thandi! Why?!?

THANDI

It's not good for you.

MANDISI

No No No! This is ridiculous I can't believe how far you've gone. I mean drinking poison! Are you trying to kill yourself Thandi? Answer me! Are you trying to.. I just, I don't know what to do anymore, it's just that I can't come back here and take care of you but you obviously need someone to look after you/

THANDI

No I don't, it will be fine.

MANDISI

No you are not fine! This is not fine! Nothing in this shack is fine. You are slipping. And there is this big beautiful life out there for you, in this big modern world waiting for you to join it and you sit in here embracing this fucking depression! You can not do this. You just... You break my heart.

THANDI

Ja, well...

MANDISI

(Cont.) I meant it when I said I can't come here anymore/

THANDI

You don't have to/

MANDISI

I can't just leave you like this/

THANDI

Yes you can, and will/

MANDISI

You cannot live like this/

THANDI

I'm not going to. I wouldn't even call this living, just getting by on scraps.

MANDISI

Thandi, what am I going to/

THANDI

It is Ndebele custom that if a person is killed in an accident or something tragic. That the mourners come to that site where they died, and take a branch from some special tree...umm... You are Zulu, you now the tree I'm talking about. They put that branch over their shoulder and use it to guide that person's spirit home.

But there is one condition Mandisi. You can't look back. The mourners can't look back because if they do that person's spirit can get lost forever.

MANDISI

I'm a Christian we don't...

THANDI

When there is nobody left to remember you that is when you have truly died. You will put a piece of aloe in water to remove bad luck. You wait a week and do not socialize, wear all black and shave your hair... well you're good there. After that week of mourning you forget about me. Don't keep me here. And when your hair grows back like a flower in the springtime... or when it should have grown back like a flower in the... anyway. You will be new and should start over. And if you ever feel my spirit gently tugging you back, you tell me (*song : NJALO*) and I will go away from your memories. You will be happy. You will be free.

MANDISI

No I won't. I can't be... I will never be... last night I...

THANDI

It's Fine. Just think about it Mandisi.

MANDISI

I can not entertain such ideas so drop it!

THANDI

Well, you **could**/

MANDISI

No I couldn't/

THANDI

I mean you **can**, you just don't want to/

MANDISI

No I can't/

THANDI

You just don't **want** to/

MANDISI

I CAN'T AND I DON'T WANT TO! The bible says/

THANDI

The bible was written by some man/

MANDISI

The bible was written by GOD/

THANDI

By some man translating God's word... seems very open to interpretation if you ask me/

MANDISI

No one is asking you! It is GOD's Word! You can't fight me on that! I am right.

THANDI

In theory.

MANDISI

Ahhhh Woman you are sooooo... Why can't you just...

THANDI

Do what you want me to do?

MANDISI

Yes! Please!

THANDI

No.

MANDISI

(Beat) You would have made an amazing lawyer you know that.

THANDI

You would have made an amazing poet.

MANDISI

Okay. I get it.

THANDI

Do you? Anyway I still have a chance to change something. The worms are going to love my University brain. Maybe one will eat it and that money would have been worth while.

MANDISI

Worms don't even have brains.

THANDI

Exactly, maybe one eats my DNA and it changes their DNA and a whole species of worms are born with brains. Like giraffes with short necks evolved into the giraffes with long necks/

MANDISI

I don't want to talk about this/

THANDI

Oh come on bhuti,/ God made evolution.

MANDISI

Because it's morbid. And God made giraffes with long necks because the short neck giraffes couldn't eat the food!

THANDI

Well that is solved then. God will make worms with my brain matter.

MANDISI

Grr grrr grrr.

Thandi starts coughing, it is really bad. She tries to get some beer. Mandisi feels helpless and unable to help his friend, he grabs the container for water and heads out.

MANDISI

I'm going to get you some water.

Mandisi starts to leave but realizes he has no idea where to go.

Where am I going?

Thandi tries to answer but can't get many words out between her coughs.

MANDISI

Forget it. I will just ask someone. Stay here.

Mandisi leaves. Thandi finally releases the cough that she has been trying to hold back from Mandisi. We see how sick she really is, as she falls on the coffin violently gasping for air. She ends up in a fetal position and alone. She notices the silence and embraces it like an old friend. She lies on top on the coffin with her eyes closed.

Voices are heard off stage singing **"Thula tu" Lullaby.**

Lights change and the world moves. Mandisi and Jan enter singing with water buckets. They walk around the coffin dumping dirt onto Thandi and the floor in front of the coffin. They are in another space and time. When they finish dumping dirt Thandi wakes up and talks to the audience. Jan and Mandisi sing "Thula tu" underneath her monologue as they watch Thandi from outside of the shack.

THANDI

You know, I have such beautiful dreams now. When I first found out I was sick my dreams were scary, and terrifying. Of bad things happening. I would trip, or robbed, or shot and I would jolt awake like, (*inhale, she opens her eyes*) and I couldn't go back to sleep. One time I was crying in my sleep. I had lost something, I can't remember what, but it was important, something I didn't know was important yet. I couldn't recognize what it was but it felt like a piece of me being ripped away, and I wasn't whole anymore. When I woke I had tears leaking out of my closed eyes. My pillow was wet, not from drool. I would drool so much, my poor sister and I had to share a bed growing up, she would call it lake Thandi. "Last night I took a swim in Lake Thandi", she would say. I would laugh. Life was... Anyway... The day I told my mother that I was sick. I came home from graduation and she was so happy. She greeted me in the front yard and gave me a big hug. I gave her my degree and it just came out. I couldn't hold it in, I was sick. And she changed right there in front of me, something behind her eyes shifted, like a bird flying away behind her body and my mother flew away on the back of that bird. The whole time standing there, in front of me, where a minute felt like a life time... Gone. And as she turned around and walked away, she never looked behind her, left me standing in the yard. And when she locked the front door I knew that I no longer had a mother. And... I... Ever since then my dreams are magical, beautiful, effervescent. Sometimes I try to stay asleep all day to keep living in them. Ha, I love it!

Thandi falls asleep, and the Lullaby ends. Jan disappears as Mandisi picks up the water bucket. The Lights shift and we are back inside the shack.

Mandisi enters with the water bucket, slightly wet from the water and sweat.

MANDISI

It looks like I pee myself! I'm walking back, and people keep pointing and laughing. I think they know I'm not from around here but...

Mandisi notices Thandi is asleep. He bends down and touches her head lightly. He tries to clean some of the dirt but gets overwhelmed and sits down next to her.

MANDISI

I really need to tell you that- I don't know how to say this- because I don't want you to hate me- but I guess it doesn't matter- Last night I... (pause)

He sees her breathing is labored, he touches her finger tips.

MANDISI

(To Thandi)

Out of the brown dust and hopes a child was created.

A sigh

A song

A burp

A fart

(BAM)

Lights change and the world moves. Jan enters underneath the above creating the rhythm of a heartbeat. The following is to the Audience as the three of them say these words individually and sometimes together. They use Gumboot dance steps to create the (BAM) sounds. This is not Choreo-Poetry. There should always be a steady beat that resembles the sound of a heartbeat.

Her eyes reflected the night sky, her hair was the color of moist earth, and unlike most babies she asked for nothing.

(BAM) So people loved her.

She was raised on Maze meal and water.

The sun

Desire

The earth

A need

She rolled in dust, pirouetted in the dark, never wanted to take a bath, but stayed in the vast never ending ocean for hours. With mosquito bites on her thighs and childless eyes

(BAM) She was the answer to an unheard question.

(BAM) A gift to an unknown future.

And deep in her possession was a rare golden light. It poured out of her, as she desperately tried to hide it.

(BAM) But it blocked the night sky

and the township couldn't sleep

People started to notice she was different, one day she noticed as well. She felt watched, fought to look the same, changed her body, molded like clay.

(BAM) But the light shown through and blocked the moon.

The people grew angry,

Lightning

A scream

Restless

Tired

The township wanted to sleep and missed the moon. They banished the girl. Ripped her from her home, placed her near the tree of infinity and left at the first sight of a spring blossom.

(BAM) She screamed at a door with no answers, talked to air molecules, ate dust and drank her tears.

Her confession as they fall to the ground.

She falls with them, she gives in to the earth.

Comfort
 Disappear
 Wrapped in a blanket of timeless creation, wrapped in dust.
 She becomes dust. She has found home.
 (BAM) Quiet,
 Stillness
 Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

(BAM) Decades go by.
 (BAM) A stranger probes deep into the earth in search of water. A traveler from another land.
 (BAM) He finds her, a vast stream of golden answers. The stranger sees her light.
 Rare
 Beautiful
 Expensive
 He takes a piece of her away, and sells it to the highest bid. He comes back for more.
 Others come with him and they mine down deep into the earth and find her.
 (BAM) Taking pieces of her away
 away
 pieces
 more
 more
 money pour in like rain. They rip her open, mine deeper, take pieces away, dig deeper, deformed, taking pieces away, but they love her, take pieces away
 (BAM) The golden light dims,
 take pieces away
 only one piece left.
(Mandisi returns to the seat he started the story in.)
 They leave her. Dug into, deformed. She cries like lightning, nobody hears her.

Thandi repeats this last line as she lays back down on the coffin as she was when they started the story.

Jan leaves while keeping the sound of the heart beat on his chest.

MANDISI

(BAM) she lies down outside of Jo'bug and becomes the dust.
 Quiet
 Stillness
 Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

When it ends Jan appears in the doorway, the lights come back to normal, and we are back in the present. Jan knocks on the outside of the shack.

MANDISI

I don't know how to tell you this but last night I...

THANDI

You what?

JAN

(Knocking) Hello?

MANDISI

You were awake?!

JAN

(Knocking) Sawubona?

THANDI

I don't think so. I heard you in my dream- you said "last night I..." What?

JAN

Sawubona

MANDISI

Sharp, sharp.

THANDI

Hello.

JAN

Hello? AHHH, Ja, Hello 109 N.D. Good afternoon or evening, AHH, afternoon. I guess it really doesn't matter; it's just that strange part of the day. AHH, sorry, long day you know? (Jan recognizes Thandi) Well of course you do. You are part of the reason it was so long. My name's Jan De Klerk I'm from the Johannesburg Department of Human Settlements, I'm just doing routine checks on the Flood kits we sent to this area. You received some wood from us about... AHHH Shit! (drops papers and starts searching through them on the ground to find hers) you received a kit about a month ago. Ja, I just have to do a routine inspection on the progress toward repairing your home, AHHH

THANDI

Khawume maan!

Jan takes a step in.

Eh eh! You can't just come in here.

JAN

Well, I'm sorry but I would have knocked again but you seem to be in need of a door this time.

THANDI

It's right there. Now get out of here! Hamba Hamba, We're fine.

JAN

Hamba, hamba. Yes I have heard that a lot today.

THANDI

Then... Voetsek!

JAN

That's great but unfortunately I can't instantly grant your request. I have a job, and I have to do that job to the best of my ability. I took an oath/

THANDI

I don't care about an oath! What do you want?

JAN

Ja! Right, as I was saying before. My name is/

THANDI

Jan! We know.

JAN

Yes, glad to see you were listening as I was saying my name- sorry. I'm from the Department of Human Settlements, and I'm just checking up on the building supplies we provided you, after the flooding in this area and to check on progress of... your... home. *(Pause)* I believe we sent you a door.

MANDISI

Ja! She got the door. Why don't you show him the door.

JAN

Yes, we can start with the door, that would be great... *(Shuffles papers)*

THANDI

We can start by you turning around, and walking, and keep walking till your back at whatever god forsaken hole you crawled out from. While you're there you can tell the Department of Human Settlements, that they can take their building supplies and shove them up/

MANDISI

Thandi!

JAN

You're Thandi?!? You sent me off in the wrong direction on purpose? Spent half the day trying to get back to where I started in the first place! OH this is it man/

THANDI

Voetsek! Just Piss off!

MANDISI

Sorry man, she's gotten a little hostile since she's gone off the meds.

JAN

Oh, Well, Ja!

THANDI

Mandisi! My business, Eh!

MANDISI

Thandi! Grr grr grr! He's just trying to do his job.

JAN

Oh, thank you brother.

THANDI

He's not your brother.

MANDISI

Ya man, I'm not your brother.

JAN

Great! That's settled then, we are of no relation. But now that I have found Miss Thandi no last name, if I could just/

THANDI

You could just leave. What's wrong with you are you hard of hearing?

JAN

No, Thandi my ears are fine/

THANDI

Then get out!

JAN

I really want to but unfortunately, I have a job to do/

THANDI

I don't care about the job you have to do.

JAN

Okay, okay... Thandi, that's your name right?

THANDI

No.

JAN

Well it says here that is your name.

MANDISI

That's her name.

THANDI

Stay out of this Mandisi!

MANDISI

Yeh lis' umoya... or Hey sharp sharp (Calm down.) Why are you so hot, eh? Just let him speak.

THANDI

I don't care what he has to say. I don't trust him.

MANDISI

Why?

THANDI

Why? Why not! Why should I? Look at him!

MANDISI

Thandi don't be a racist.

THANDI

He works for the government- the Black Government.

MANDISI

He has done nothing wrong!

JAN

He's right; technically I've done nothing. I couldn't even knock you don't have a door/

THANDI

It's right there! He broke it, otherwise it would be there, and you would be here! *(She starts coughing.)*

JAN

Good point, but/

MANDISI

I didn't even break it on purpose! It just came off!

THANDI

Maybe you shouldn't have been handling it so aggressively!

MANDISI

Maybe if you didn't live in a shack.

THANDI

Maybe you should go home.

MANDISI

Maybe you should come with me.

THANDI

Maybe I'm not going.

MANDISI

Maybe I can't leave you here.

THANDI

Maybe maybe maybe maybe. *(Coughing)*

MANDISI

Maybe you should calm down.

THANDI

I am calm! *(Wheezing)*

JAN

Great! That was lovely, heart warming really. So maybe we can go over the supplies that we sent you, and then I can go. *(He picks up a piece of trash.)* so much dirt/

THANDI

Oh No!

MANDISI

Just put it down. She has a Feng shui.

JAN

What?

MANDISI

You know... an order to things here.

JAN

Really?

THANDI

(Still trying to recover from last cough.)

Get him out Mandisi! Doesn't even know a fung shui.

MANDISI

(Hands her a beer.) Drink! *(To Jan)* So what papers do you need us to fill out?

JAN

I just need to inspect the materials and make sure they are being used toward the building of a new home or home improvements. So if you could just allow me to look around then we can sign some papers /and

THANDI

No! No lookie round, no lookie round! I...

MANDISI

You sit! Hlala! Sit! *(To Jan)* Well, I can tell you that I came here today to start building so everything is fine here! *(He picks up something completely wrong, and some wood and starts whacking it with authority.)* See, all good here. So where are the papers to sign?

JAN

You came here to help her build?

MANDISI

Yea, so it's fine you know.

JAN

Really?

MANDISI

Of course.

JAN

I don't think so. I'm sorry. I mean you are dressed awfully nice to be building a home.

THANDI

What do you care what he is wearing?

JAN

Well, I need to do my job. I'm not small of mind/

THANDI

Tsssss.

JAN

(Cont.) I don't want to put question to his credibility, but I don't know anybody that plans to cut wood in such nice clothing.

THANDI

Well then, obviously you don't know Mandisi; cause if you did then you would know that these clothes are not that nice to him. Oh no! He's big time. Suits, hats, leather shoes, bling bling/

MANDISI

I brought a change of clothing/

THANDI

Besides, he's going to change.

JAN

That may be, but you've had these supplies for over a month/

THANDI

I've been busy.

JAN

What? Okay, where is the door we provided you? Where? No answer? Well/ that's what...

MANDISI

She has it man, calm down.

JAN

Where? I would love to see it. I see a few supplies in the corner over there and some in the front yard, but nothing near the amount we provided you... and you signed for/

THANDI

You know what, I'm tired of this/...

JAN

You know what I'm tired of? You are my 12th house of the same shit. You need to prove to me that you are building a suitable home with the materials that the government provided you, and paid for! Or I am going to write you up! By God woman I will do it! So where is it? Hummm...

THANDI

Get out of my home!

JAN

You call this a home?

THANDI

Now!!!

JAN

No! Nee nee nee (no, no, no) ! Not until I have done my job! A job, I have a job. Be mad, yell, if you want but I'm not leaving until you cooperate!

MANDISI

Just show him something Thandi.

JAN

Ja! Just show me something, anything... come on, I dare you... well let's see it! (pause) I knew it, just as I had suspected you've got nothing to show.

But it's all right for you to yell at me, throw me out, send me on a fucking waste of my day journey into Dante's inferno, but you are the one at fault! You!!! Stealing from the government, selling the supplies to buy beer! I'm going to write you up/ that's what I'm going to do.

THANDI

I hate you!

MANDISI

Thandi!

JAN

Jah! Well I hate you too. (beat) What else you got? (beat) Good. So why don't we start with the door, wouldn't that be nice!

THANDI

You want to see the door?

JAN

Yes, I would love to see the door!

THANDI

I show you the door then you go?

JAN

Ja! Fine!

THANDI

Fine. *(She takes the sheet of the coffin.)* That piece is the door.

JAN

(Looks at door.) You made a box out of a door? *(Beat)* Of course you would, why wouldn't you. It makes complete sense. I mean why bother using it as a door, since you obviously don't need one. Why do we have a door anyway, they're completely over rated. It's just one of those annoying social excesses that Soweto has decided is futile and useless. I mean what am I supposed to tell them?

THANDI

You said if I show you the door then you'll go... So go! Bye!

JAN

Yes, but I was hopefully expecting it to be attached to some kind of home, not a decorative box! *(Referring to papers.)* Question 7 has client used supplies for home assembly? Answer, she built a box isn't going to work for the Department of Human Settlements...

MANDISI

It's not a box. It's a coffin.

JAN

What?

MANDISI

She built herself a coffin. Depending on how you look at it, it could qualify as a home.

THANDI

Ja! That's the front door. Want in?

JAN

NO?!

THANDI

It's where you belong.

JAN

What did you just say? *(Pause)* Woman did you just say I belong in a coffin?

THANDI

Yes, that's what I said/

JAN

Is that a threat because I can easily radio our security officers /just down

THANDI

What are you going to do really you are with my people, in my area/

MANDISI

This is not your area!

JAN

What I can and will do is take the supplies back, and you can pay the government the difference. You want to talk big. That's it, get me the wood/

THANDI

Put it down! Don't you touch anything/ Jy gat! (You ass!) or Jou Foken Poes (You Fucken Cunt)

JAN

I can see you built your coffin out of the wood. I'm going to need to take that apart/

Thandi picks up some dirt and throws it in
JAN's face, she pushes him away from her
coffin, Mandisi grabs her.

THANDI

You will not touch-, no you won't/ take anything

JAN

I wont no, but now that you have assaulted me, I'm going to radio our security officers/ with the truck and we are going to load it up...

Jan gets on his walkie-talkie for security.

MANDISI

Thandi just leave it be, we can go for walk and come back when they're gone.

JAN

/5 min?

THANDI

No! He can't take it!! I built it, it's all I have!

Lights Shift. The world changes. Thandi and Mandisi freeze while Jan talks to the audience.

JAN

(To audience.)

She built a fucking coffin! Ahhhhhhhhh!!!! This is my 12th house today. I use that term loosely, nothing I have seen today would I qualify as a home. A place where you put your heart, and keep it safe. You know. But every place I visited it's the same thing, "Get out! Hamba, hamba" little to no work done on improvements. Some of them didn't even have the supplies anymore. They probably sell them, who knows! They complain to their ANC Government, "You promised us this, you told us that. My house is flooded, Where is it?" Government actually sends them the supplies, which is a miracle in its self since the ANC never follows through on its promises, but they actually do for once and bam, sold or nothing done.

Then they'll turn around next time it floods and ask for more. Complain about this and that. Everyone wants the quick fix, but they will do nothing for themselves. Even if you give it to them for free they won't build it. Waste of money. Worst part is that I don't give a shit about this job. I actually hate this job. Hate!! That's not a strong enough word. I don't want to care about what these people do with this shit. I studied philosophy like Plato, Kant, Marx, Hegel and Proudhon. I debated over philosophy of poverty, the machinations of the state and the philosophy of right! "Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains"- Rousseau. I long for those conversations. The university is full of them. Then you leave and get some second rate job to pay the bills and they seem like a distant dream. Another reality on another planet. I can't even see them now. I think I have forgotten what I wanted to be or do in this world, like the sinew of my muscles are made up of hardship and pain, and disappointment, ahhh South Africa. It just seems pointless, like I'm striving and working to live in this shit... Ja, forget it. *(Pause)* I might just be clinically depressed.

(Beat)

I used to dream of such things like my mother or love, that electricity in an embrace, the dew on the trees in the early morning, and colors so many vibrant colors like you see only in the townships, dancing, music ohh and rain, the smell of South Africa being washed clean. Now I have dreams of gunshots, but it's not just one shot it's many.

I keep shooting, bam, bam, bam. On the last shot I wake.

This shit job was one of the best I could get; I thought I could change things from the inside like a fucking naive idiot and I hate children, so I'm not teaching because that would have been it's own unique form of torture. All my friends said I was lucky, Ha!!!

Affirmative action is for the black majority, 35 million blacks in this country, 5 million whites. I only got it because even the blacks didn't want to do it, going through townships asking people to prove they used the supplies from the government! White man, it's like a death wish! Ja, Ja, I know... nobody has pity for the crying Afrikaner, fathers of apartheid. But who are they when they turn around and do the exact same thing?

As the light changes and we shift back into the present, Thandi takes Mandisi's Gun and points it at Jan.

THANDI

You are not taking anything. Get in the box!

MANDISI

Thandi! What are you doing?

THANDI

Stay out of this Mandisi. You heard me get in!

JAN

Ja! I heard you... Thandi/

THANDI

Don't say my fucking name.

JAN

This is unnecessary; we don't need to do this, lets just talk about the rationally/

THANDI

Move!

JAN

Security is coming now.

THANDI

I will kill anyone that comes in that door but first I will kill you. Get in!!

Shoots gun into the air.

JAN

Yes, yes... Please... I will leave. Please... I'm sorry, really I am just the fucking messenger, come on! Oh God!

THANDI

Don't you have eyes? There's no God here! *(She closes coffin.)* Hand me that nail Mandisi.

MANDISI

I want no part of this. I'll do nothing

THANDI

Of course you wont. It's people like you that keeps this country on its knees praying and not doing.

She gets a nail and hammer and starts nailing the coffin.

MANDISI

The security is coming Thandi? What then!!! I've got a family!

JAN

(He hears the pounding and starts screaming.)

THANDI

Shut up! Shut your mouth! I told you not to come in but you felt that you were entitled to enter. You are not entitled to anything any more. How does that feel. Welcome to my home. I didn't ask for it but I guess it was the best that I could do. I didn't ask for your supplies, but you sent them and now you hold me accountable on how I use them? You are in my home I don't care what you think of it! Why is it such a big deal to everyone that I make it myself? That I want something beautiful that I put my hands into. I want to create something for myself. I didn't get to choose much! AIDS, Broken shack. But I get to choose this one thing! My death, eh? You choose your heaven Mandisi; you build your shrine, worship your God! This is like that for me! So I'm not going to let you or Mr. ANC tell me how! This is the one thing that is mine, my whole life, let me paint my night sky on the door, let me use whatever I have to make a cushion for my head to rot on! Do you hear me?

MANDISI

I hear you Thandi. Put the gun down/

THANDI

Do you really hear me?

MANDISI

Yes, just please put it down. I can't have this happen.

THANDI

Maybe you can't stop it!

MANDISI

Maybe, but I've had enough of this today! I understand how you feel/ please just put it down.

THANDI

Understand? How could you possibly understand anything Mandisi? You have the perfect life!

MANDISI

That's not true, I/

THANDI

You what? Tell me that your dying, tell me that when people look at you they pity you, tell me they move their children away from you when you're on the street, they can't look you in the eyes. Tell me that your God has taken everything you worked for and dreamed of/

MANDISI

I'll tell you that there are people that love you and you pushed them away! I'll tell you that you hiding from life doesn't save anyone the pain of your absence. I'll tell you that blaming everyone for their happiness/

THANDI

How do you know/

MANDISI

(*Cont.*) isn't going to help. I'll tell you that I might just be able to relate to something you are going through. No, I'm not sick, but I am not living the life I dreamed, and last night I... oh God... I know what it feels like to loose everything?

THANDI

You know nothing. You have family, love, God. Your life meant something, you were not worthless.

MANDISI

I get it!

THANDI

No you don't! God has not forgotten you/

MANDISI

I lost my heaven! There is no place for me there! I didn't loose my wallet, and I didn't drop your food.

THANDI

What are you talking about?

MANDISI

I didn't want you to freak out. I was driving here from Jo'burg last night, and I pulled up to the light and this... He put a gun to my head. My window was down. Why did I have my window down! They got me out of the car and took my wallet with my pay check and your food and... I don't know something in me just snapped. I couldn't believe somebody could just strip me of everything I had worked so hard for, Ja! I got so hot... his friends got into my car ... and when he got into my car, I grabbed him right before he got in, I grabbed his gun and shot!

The following is to the audience. Thandi and Jan join Mandisi, speaking the words of the poem sometimes individually, sometimes together. They use Gumboot dance steps to create the (BAM) sounds. This is not Choreo-Poetry. There should always be a steady beat that resembles the sound of a heartbeat.

MANDISI

But it wasn't just one shot, it was many. I kept shooting, bam, bam, bam
 (BAM) How dare you
 (BAM) Take what is mine
 (BAM) Worked so hard for, sacrificed dreams for

Jan and Thandi join, stage magic.

You rip me open, mine deeper, take pieces away, dig deeper,
 deformed, taking pieces away, but you love me, take pieces away
 (BAM) the golden light dims,
 take pieces away
 only one piece left.
 (BAM) I can't find my quiet stillness, shhhhhh

(BAM) I watch you build your wealth on top of mountains!
 (BAM) I am the mountain that feeds you.
 (BAM) That provides you with life.
 That holds you, cradles you and that you can't live without.

(BAM)I am the one you walk on!

(BAM) walk on
 (BAM) walk on
 (BAM) walk on

(BAM) I used to close my eyes and dream of love, of the African sky, limitless,
 weightless, floating.
 (BAM) My laughter poured from the earth/
 My dreams glided through the sky like a /soft cloud
 Out of the dust I was created.
 (BAM) What happened to...

(BAM) Dreams of a life I felt inspired to live.
Now I dream of gunshots.

Jan goes back inside the coffin. The lights
change and we come back to the present.

MANDISI

(Back to Thandi)

BAM BAM Bam, bam... Then I woke up. He was a small boy. I didn't know what to do. His friends had drove off. There was so much blood. I picked up his head and thought this could be my son. I walked him to the hospital and... walked just walked
What have I done? Jah, I was building my place in heaven. I worked my whole life; yes baas, no baas, good black man, good man, worked for that place. I built it like you built your coffin. See I understand!!! Now's it gone! You're trying to hold on to something to wake you up the next day. I understand!! I took a life, no turning back time... I don't know... it's gone. Put the gun down! Thandi/

THANDI

Mandisi, I will make you a deal.

MANDISI

How can I take it back? Ahhh, God, Jesus. Please. What have I done?

THANDI

It's okay brother.

MANDISI

It's not okay Thandi, it will never be okay again. God what have I done? (he starts to pray)

THANDI

What you had to do.

MANDISI

No, I didn't have to. I could have let him take the car. It was just stuff, it doesn't amount to... God, I am so sorry/

THANDI

It was an accident. You are a good man Mandisi/

MANDISI

No I'm not/

THANDI

You're human.

MANDISI

I'm so sorry/

THANDI

I forgive you, brother.

MANDISI

It's not you I am worried about, what have I done?

THANDI

Mandisi I will make you a deal.

MANDISI

What are you talking about?

THANDI

I will give you back your heaven and you will give me mine.

MANDISI

You can't do that. It's done.

THANDI

I have this man prisoner. I will let him go for you, but you must do something to save his life.

MANDISI

What are you saying? Let that man go!

THANDI

I will kill this man Mandisi! And any man that comes in here

MANDISI

Okay, calm down Thandi!

THANDI

Ja! I will! So you must stop me, to do that you must shoot me.

No no no...You can get your heaven back. You save his life, I take mine, it's not on your conscience.

MANDISI

What? No! Absolutely not!

THANDI

That's what you have to do to save his life/

MANDISI

No!

THANDI

Yes!

MANDISI

NO! Did you hear nothing I just said?!

THANDI

Please, they're going to take the only thing I have!!! Please have mercy. This illness is like a clock ticking backward. You get in line and fate gives you a number. Then one day God starts calling numbers and you watch as everyone around you gets called. Meanwhile you just wait for your turn. But as time creeps, and everyone else is gone you know your number's coming, you're next... That's the worst part, the wait. Why bother trying when you know it's coming. Then you start coughing up blood and you know. I'm dying. Every day it gets worse and I know there is no hope, no miracle drug. I can feel it coming, now. I'm scared, please. When you leave, I'm scared and alone and and... there is this darkness here. Right here. I feel it creeping and I don't want to open my eyes. It can creep to other people too, and consume them. I can't live with myself... Please it's going to hurt. No water... I beg you. It's the most beautiful act of friendship of love... I need you to help me my friend. Or I will shoot him then myself!

MANDISI

Stop; stop...

Takes the gun out of her hand.

THANDI

(begging in desperation)

Please, please... Please Mandisi, please...

MANDISI

No! Get up, forget it.

He opens the coffin and lets Jan out.

MANDISI

Get out! Go, we are sorry. Call them now and tell them not to come.

JAN

Yes, *(He gets on walkie-talkie.)* I'm just going to go. They won't come. *(Stops at door.)* Thandi, the home you built is beautiful, having just spent some quality time inside, ummm... I think you will find it comforting, peaceful. And, I don't know what to say... It warmed my heart. Sorry for you Thandi. I really am. Sorry Mandisi, I'll go.

Jan leaves.

(BEAT)

MANDISI

See now, all better now! Yoh! Come now Thandi. I'll help you with your coffin.

Mandisi starts putting things in place. At one point he lifts Thandi to standing by her armpits. He pauses behind her for a moment, pats her on the back and starts to clean up.

MANDISI

What song were you singing when I came?

Long Pause. Thandi stands lost in tears, weak and vulnerable, unable to speak. She is unable to face Mandisi.

THANDI

Njalo.

MANDISI

God! You are so morbid. I like that Mariam Makeba it was more upbeat.

Mandisi starts to sing, and cleans.

MANDISI

Come come, how does your part go?

Mandisi sings. Thandi doesn't notice as she is frozen and lost. Mandisi starts to sing off tune. Thandi comes slowly back to life.

THANDI

You're making my ears bleed. It's more like this.

Thandi starts to sing her part, Mandisi joins her.

MANDISI

Here put that in there.

Thandi goes to put the pillow in the coffin. When her back is to Mandisi he lifts up the gun and points it at her.

MANDISI

Thandi.

Thandi turns around and sees the gun. She smiles.

LIGHTS, OFF

We hear the sound of a gun shot.